

Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani Sahab (May Allah Ta'ala protect and preserve him),
Vice President Darul Uloom Karachi

Memories

(Episode 18)

The Masjid of Darul Uloom

After shifting to Sharafi, while classrooms and student hostels of Darul Uloom had been constructed, a proper Masjid could not be build immediately, and initially the prayers would be offered on the floor near a well. Later when the number of students increased, the hall of the northern classroom building was used as a *Musalla* (prayer place). The official groundbreaking of the Masjid took place on 15 Shaban 1377H (circa 7 March 1958) during the annual gathering. Its construction steadily continued, and it was on 6 Rabee' Ath-Thani 1378H that its roof was to be laid. Our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) said that instead of getting it done by construction workers, the task of laying the roof should be done by Darul Uloom's students and staff themselves. Consequently, all the teachers, students and admin staff of Darul Uloom remained busy in laying the roof that entire day. We too, Alhamdulillah, attained this blessing. For years upon years, congregational prayers continued taking place in this Masjid. After the passing away of our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) this Masjid also became cramped for space, whereafter a bigger plan for its expansion began under the supervision of my respected elder brother Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Rafi Usmani Sahab (may his shade be extended), and which has Alhamdulillah reached its completion now. The old Masjid has been entirely incorporated into the new one.

Various events would be convened to give students the opportunity to apply (and hence enhance) their speaking and writing skills. In *Jamadi Ath-Thanee* of that year (1378H), equivalent to December 1958, a writing competition was held in which students were given three questions related to acquiring knowledge. I wrote an article on "Islam's stance on knowledge" which was declared first-place winner.

Anyway! In this manner our academic year, with the grace and favours of Allah Ta'ala, safely and successfully came to an end, and Alhamdulillah the results of the annual exams were also good. But I still remember the heartache from an incident during those exams. We had prepared quite well for the exams and thus hoped that InshaAllah we will get good marks. And this did happen in most of the subjects. But our exam of *Sharh Nukhbatul Fikr* was set by Hazrat Maulana Akbar Ali Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) who was well-known for setting tough exam papers, and also for being stringent in giving marks. So I remained apprehensive about this exam. When we sat for the paper, I was dazzled at one particular question. I even remember that question till this day. The question cited the following passage from *Sharh Nukhbatul Fikr*:

"فإن قيل: إنما اتفقوا علي وجوب العمل به لا علي صحته، معناه"

The following question was written below this passage: “Explain this passage, and describe the “سند منع” (*sanad man*)”. Since only this portion of the passage was quoted, due to my lack of understanding I was unable to understand it without its context being mentioned. Neither could I fathom what the *dameer* (pronoun) of “وجوب العمل به” referred to. What to say of “سند منع”. I could not even grasp what was meant by “منع”. Consequently, I wrote some nonsense answer. As a result, Hazrat Maulana Akbar Ali Sahab (may his secret be sanctified) allotted me forty one marks (perhaps due to answers to other questions), which meant I passed at Lower Class for this book. Even though I had studied hard for Mishkat Sharif, I attained much less than expected marks in that exam as well. I don’t remember getting fewer marks in the exam of any other book. I was heartbroken at this, and it is a *barakah* (blessing) of that heartache that today, after fifty six years since that exam, I still remember the question.

The following were my results in the annual exams that year:

Subject	Marks
Mishkat Sharif	41
<i>Nukhbatul Fikr</i>	41
Sharh Aqaid	50
Jalalayn Sharif	50
<i>Al Fauzul Kabeer</i>	49
<i>Husoon Hameediyah</i>	49

I had put the following note beside these results in my personal diary: “The exams of Mishkat and *Nukhbatul Fikr* were set by Maulana Akbar Ali Sahab.”

My first *Fiqhi* (jurisprudential) writing

After the end of our academic year, we returned home to spend our vacations of Shaban and Ramadan. A detailed question regarding the ruling of conducting congregational *Tahajjud* prayers during Ramadan had come to our respected father (may Allah’s mercy be upon him). Our respected father (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) told me: “Gather the relevant references from books of *Fiqh* (jurisprudence) regarding this issue, so that replying to it becomes easy for me and you get to practice the methodology of referring to *Fiqhi* (jurisprudential) books.” This suited me as well, as I got the chance to satisfy my craving. I thus gathered the relevant passages from all the books of *Fiqh* I could get my hand on from our respected father’s (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) personal library, and collected a heap of books, each marked at the relevant pages, on my bed. When our respected father saw the heap, he became elated and said: “By gathering so many books, you have acted according to my own temperament”. Encouraged by these words, I submitted: “If you permit, shall I pen down what I can deduce from these references and present it to you?” Our respected father gave his permission, whereafter I wrote a detailed answer and presented it to our respected father. Reading it, our respected father was overjoyed and made several supplications for me. And thereafter in his reply to the question (dated 4th Shawwal 1378H) he wrote the following as a preface:

"I assigned this question to my youngest son Muhammad Taqi (may Allah keep him safe) who will begin his studies of *Dawra-e-Hadith* this year. What I had in mind is that finding the relevant references will help him practice the methodology of referring to *Fiqhi* books, and thereafter I would write the answer. But *MashaAllah* this boy is intelligent. He extracted all the relevant references without any help from me, and thereafter used those passages to write the answer by himself. When I looked at what he had written, I found it entirely satisfactory. I am thus sending the same answer with my verification on it."

And he wrote the following at the end of the Fatwa:

"لله درّ المجيب، حيثُ أصاب فيما أجاب، وأجاد فيما أفاد، مع ملاحظة أدب الأكابر، وفقه الله تعالى لما يُحبّ ويرضاه"

This was my first academic writing which the late respected Majd Ud Deen Sahab of Sylhet later published as a pamphlet titled "*Jama'at Tahajjud Dar Ramazan*". I was in the fifteenth year of my life, and our *Dawra-e-Hadith* began after Eid.

The Year of *Dawra-e-Hadith*

Our lessons of Bukhari Sharif that year (Shawwal 1378H, equivalent to April 1959) were assigned to Hazrat Maulana Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him); Tirmidhi Sharif was under Hazrat Maulana Saleem Ullah Khan Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him); Sahih Muslim was under Hazrat Maulana Akbar Ali Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him); Abu Dawood Sharif was assigned to Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Haqeeq Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him), but was later transferred to Hazrat Maulana Qari Riayatullah Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him), and we studied most of it under him. Sunan Nasai and Muwatta Imam Muhammad were assigned to Hazrat Maulana Sehban Mahmood Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him), Sunan Ibn Majah to Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Haqeeq Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) and Muwatta Imam Malik and Shama'il Tirmidhi to our respected father (may his secret be sanctified). In those days, our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) used to live in the city and would visit Darul Uloom once or twice a week, and would also conduct the classes during those visits.

Engrossment in Studies

The year of *Dawra-e-Hadith* is a memorable one in the life of a student of knowledge. Detaching himself from all other topics, the student makes the *Ahadith* (sayings) of the Noble Messenger (peace be upon him) the focal point of all his attention, and remains engrossed, day and night, with thoughts of the same. Lessons of *Ahadith* take place in each and every period of study in the Madrasa. The following couplet of Hazrat Majzoob (may Allah's mercy be upon him) would often come to my mind:

أُنْ كَا ذَكَرْ، أُنْ كِي تَمَا، أُنْ كِي يَادْ

وَقْتِ كَتْنَا قِيَمَتِي بِي آجِ كُلْ

Discussing him, yearning for him, remembering him

How precious is time nowadays

Due to the blessings of companionship with Hazrat Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him), the love for books had already been instilled in my heart since the previous year. When *Dawra-e-Hadith* began, the heart desired to sit in each class by preparing well for each lesson beforehand. To this end, we would bring with us some books from our respected father's (may Allah's mercy be upon him) personal library; one was *Fathul Mulhim*, the commentary on Sahih Muslim; the other was an incomplete commentary of Tirmidhi Sharif titled "*At-Teeb Ash-Shadhee*" which had been written by Hazrat Maulana Ashfaq Ahmad Sahab Kandhlavi (may Allah's mercy be upon him) and had been printed as a big-sized book using an old typeface. Hazrat Binnori's commentary "*Ma'arifus Sunan*" had not been published by that time so this was the best commentary of Tirmidhi as of that time. However, it only covered up to *Kitab Ut-Taharah* (Book of Purity). In addition, our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) also kindly gave us *Al-Urf Ash-Shadhee* and *Al-Kawkab Ad-Durree*. Besides these, the lectures of Tirmidhi delivered by Hazrat Allama Anwar Shah Sahab Kashmiri (may Allah's mercy be upon him), which our respected father (may his secret be sanctified) had himself penned down, were also available. And our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) had them separately copied over by his paternal cousin, Hazrat Maulana Zahoor Ahmad Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him), and thereafter added marginal notes from *Al-Kawkab Ad-Durree* and *Al-Urf Ash-Shadhee*, and kept it as a large bounded volume. He kindly gave this to us as well. As a result, we had excellent reference material available for Tirmidhi Sharif. For Bukhari Sharif, the heart desired to refer to *Umdatul Qari* and *Fathul Bari* as much as possible. We did not possess these two books, so we had to visit Darul Uloom's library for studying them. The library in those days was located inside the derelict building which was called *Purana Bangla* (old bungalow). This was the same bungalow that the late Haji Ibrahim Dadabhai Sahab, the one who had endowed his land to Darul Uloom, had given it to Darul Uloom together with the land. On its eastern side was a two-storey residential building. On its west, after a courtyard, was a tallish building, a part of which was used as the Admin Office. What was the Admin Office? It consisted of a long Dari rug laid on the floor, with a wooden floor desk and a bolster pillow placed on one side. The other side of this same tallish building was converted into a library in which several disorderly wooden cupboards were haphazardly strewn around, with each cupboard containing books arranged according to subject. Hazrat Maulana Abdul Khafi Sahab Saharanpuri (may Allah's mercy be upon him) was its manager and was renowned for being strict. But noticing our zeal for books, he had become very kind to us. We would visit the library after our class of Tirmidhi in the fourth period. We would study *Umdatul Qari* and *Fathul Bari* as much as we could, and would also acquaint ourselves with other books during this time. Once or twice it even so happened that I was so immersed in my study that I did not notice the library's closing time approaching. I requested Maulana (may Allah's mercy be upon him) to let me stay until Zuhr while he could go for lunch, and he kindly allowed this.

Hazrat Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) would deliver a fluent lecture in his class of Sahih Bukhari and I would pen it in Urdu. I still have a copy of those notes with me. On the other hand, Hazrat Maulana Saleem Ullah Khan Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) would dictate his lessons of Jami Tirmidhi in class, and since we got more time during dictation I would make my notes in Arabic. And the truth of the matter is that Hazrat's lectures would be so well-organized that all aspects of the topic under discussion would be holistically gathered together. And the discussions which one would otherwise have to collect from topics scattered around in other commentaries, would be

readily available, sifted and laid out in a very logical sequence. I still have the manuscripts of both of these lectures.

This kind of pleasure and absorption during student life meant that one would be oblivious even to one's own body and health. In those days, *Kharawein* would be used in Darul Uloom for moving around. Perhaps few would have remained today who even know the meaning of *Kharawein*. This was a wooden slipper with a rubber strap, and one had to wear it by putting one's foot under the rubber strap. If used on a hard floor, it would produce a loud clacking sound which could be heard till far. They were customarily used for going to bathrooms for ablution, but we used it as normal slippers. After going home on Thursdays, we would wear fresh clothes on Friday and bring another pair to Darul Uloom, and change into this pair on Monday or Tuesday. Due to *Takrar*, studying, or sometimes even lessons till late into the night, we got less time for sleep. And lessons would start from early morning. But if ever there was time before a teacher's arrival for lessons, we would get the chance to lie down in a corner of the walkway. We would thus relax for a while on the bare floor.

The practical exercises of extracting *Fiqhi* (jurisprudential) rulings from books, meant to train us in deriving Fatwas, which Hazrat Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) had begun from last year continued this year as well. Besides this, our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) would also assign some writing tasks to us. At that time, our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) was publishing a new and revised version of *Imdadul Fatawa*. He said that a short biography of the author, i.e. Hakeem Ul Ummah Hazrat Thanvi (may Allah's mercy be upon him), should be added in the introduction. For this he commanded me to pen a brief account of his life. I had only just entered *Dawra-e-Hadith*. Using "*Ashrafus Sawanih*" and the late Munshi Abdur Rahman Sahab's book "*Seerat-e-Ashraf*" as references, I wrote a brief article which was perhaps my first article to be published in a book. It is still published at the beginning of *Imdadul Fatawa*, and the date Muharram 1379H (July 1959) is written at its end, which means that I had written it before our tri-monthly exams, and I would have been sixteen years and three months old, rather not even sixteen years old according to the solar calendar. I am writing this because if one were to find lack of refinement in that piece of writing, then the reason becomes known.

I received the honour of coming first in class in Sahih Bukhari and Jami Tirmidhi in the tri-monthly exams. I got 52 marks in Sahih Bukhari, which no student before me had ever attained, and also the same marks in Jami Tirmidhi, Shamail and Muwatta. I came first in Jami Tirmidhi in the six-monthly exams as well, and other than Sunan Abi Dawood, in which I got 47 marks, I did not receive less than 50 in any other subject. Rather I received 52 marks in Bukhari, 51 in Tahawi and 50 in all other books.

After the six-monthly exams in *Dawra-e-Hadith*, classes normally continue at night as well. Our class consisted of around thirty students. Thus after Isha, in the light of a cauldron, Hazrat Maulana Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) would conduct his class of Sahih Bukhari under two trees near *Purana Bangla*. These were Neem and Tamarind trees whose branches were intertwined at the top, and are still alive. Memories of those lessons flash through my mind when I pass under them today.

Especially in the lessons of Sahih Bukhari, the classes at the end of the year often comprise of those Ahadith which have already been discussed before, and the teacher had already explained them previously. Therefore, merely reading the text is sufficient for such Ahadith. As a result, classes are quite fast-paced and only those selected students are allowed to read the text who can read fast and correctly. For this, our teacher had assigned four students to read the text. Two were us two brothers. The third was Maulana Muhammad Ameen Quettavi Sahab and the fourth was Maulana Muhammad Irani. When the teacher noticed that the student was getting slow after reading for some time he would say: "Let's change the driver", and calling out one of our names would then say: "You read now". The lesson would continue in this fashion till late into the night.

I have mentioned before that Hazrat Maulana Saleem Ullah Khan Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) would dictate his lecture during the lessons of Jami Tirmidhi. However, it is natural that this took time. The lesson would therefore be slow-paced. As a result, we had only completed until the four pillars when the end of the academic year approached. Side by side, Hazrat had begun Volume two without dictation which continued at a relatively swifter pace. When very little time had left for the end of the academic year, Hazrat said: "Now, a majority of the remaining Ahadith are those which you have already read in Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim or Abu Dawood, etc. so it is sufficient to just read the remaining book". To this end, Hazrat conducted extra classes to complete the book. When approximately the last hundred pages remained, Hazrat conducted a lesson which continued throughout the night. For this, a stove was brought into the classroom and we would do rounds of tea during breaks, and the book was completed in one or two nights.

It was in those days that, in God knows what state of mental absorption, I composed the following poem addressing my classmates:

بہت ہی سخت آگے گردش ایام ہے، پی لو!
 غنیمت ہے کہ گردش میں ابھی تک جام ہے، پی لو
 تمہیں تصویر ہستی میں وفا کا رنگ بھرنا ہے
 جفا و جور کی ظلمت جہاں میں عام ہے، پی لو!
 تمہیں طاغوت کی ہے رحم طغیانی سے لڑنا ہے
 بہت سا کام ہے، پی لو، بہت سا کام ہے، پی لو!
 سخاوت جام و مینا کی بڑی نعمت ہے دیوانو!
 یہ ساقی کی توجہ بھی بڑا انعام ہے، پی لو!

Translation:

Tumultuous vagaries of time await us, drink!

Consider it fortunate that drinks are still making rounds, drink!

You have to imbue the colours of faithfulness into your essence of life,

The darknesses of oppression and tyranny have enshrouded the world, drink!

You have to battle the merciless tempests of evil,

Much needs to be done, drink, much needs to be done, drink!

Provision of glasses and drinks is a great blessing, O crazy lovers,

And attention from the cup-bearer is a great gift too, drink!

At this juncture, it feels appropriate to clarify a point. Noting the way *Dawra-e-Hadith* is taught in our *Madrasas*, the educationists of our time may object as to what is achieved by teaching so many books from start to end in this manner? Especially when similar Ahadith often repeat in those books? Several teachers often explain similar Ahadith and, near the end of the year, the teacher often suffices with mere recitation of the text? On the other hand, if summaries of the books were prepared and taught, as is done in universities, then less effort will be needed and there will also be no need of merely reciting the texts.

The answer to this objection is that there are two objectives when teaching and learning Hadith, and neither of them can be considered unimportant. The first objective is to learn the topics and discussions related to the Hadith, so that the student can understand it and is also able to learn the methodology of extracting the correct outcomes from them, and also gets acquainted with the *Jarh* and *Tadeel* of Ahadith. In other words, we can call this “*Dirayatul Hadith*” (knowledge of the Hadith). But the second objective is “*Riwayatul Hadith*” (narration of the Hadith), which means to read the principal books of Hadith in front of the teacher so that the student himself becomes part of the *sanad* (chain of transmission) of the those Ahadith. In order to protect Ahadith, Allah (the Glorious and Most High) has established such a unique mechanism in the form of *sanad* (chain of transmission) of Hadith, that it is unparalleled in any other knowledge or art of the world. It is thanks to this *sanad* that we can fully confidently say as to who all narrated any Hadith, and how reliable are they? The practice thus continues from our pious predecessors that when a teacher teaches Hadith, he quotes his *sanad*, i.e. the *sanad* with which the Hadith reached him. This practice of the student reading the Hadith in front of the teacher is continuing from the time of the *Sahaba*, and our pious elders continued this even after the books of Hadith were compiled and published, because becoming a part of the *sanad* through this practice is a blessing in itself. Mere recitation of the Hadith in front of the teacher is sufficient to achieve this blessing, as one becomes connected to the golden chain which, passing through the pious predecessors, reaches the Noble Messenger (peace be upon him) himself. The blessings of this cannot be attained by merely reading summaries of the relevant topics. Since unadulterated Islamic Madrasas have disappeared in the Muslim world outside the subcontinent, this practice has been made obsolete therein at a Madrasa level. However, some scholars still teach the Hadith *riwayatan* (i.e. including the complete narration thereof) in an individual capacity, and aficionados can attain this blessing if they want. But with the favour of Allah Ta’ala, this practice continues until today in the Madrasas in the subcontinent.

Anyway! The year of *Dawara-e-Hadith* came to an end with the grace and benevolence of Allah Ta’ala. And on Thursday 7 Rajab 1379H (circa 4 January 1960) our respected father (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) taught the last chapter of Bukhari Sharif and we thus completed it.¹ And it was time for exams in

¹ This date is recorded in my notes of *Taqreer Bukhari*.

Shaban 1379H (equivalent to February 1960). I was two months short of reaching seventeen years of age according to the lunar calendar, and eight months short according to the solar calendar. Darul Uloom Karachi was not affiliated to *Wifaqul Madaris Al-Arabiya* (federation of Islamic seminaries) by that time. The *Wifaq* did not enjoy the same status in those days as it does, by the grace and benevolence of Allah Ta'ala, today. And our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him), due to various reasons, preferred to remain separate from it at that time. As a result, all exams of Darul Uloom were conducted at its own level. However, some of our respected teachers wished for Darul Uloom to become a part of *Wifaq*, and they also presented various recommendations to resolve the issues due to which our respected father (may his secret be sanctified) disliked becoming affiliated to it.

On the other hand, it was the special grace and benevolence of Allah Ta'ala that we enjoyed extraordinary graces from our teachers, and they all viewed us favourably as well. We wrote all our exams in Arabic, which our teachers usually appreciated. It was due to this that on one occasion Hazrat Maulana Saleem Ullah Khan Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him), amidst a gathering of teachers, said that if Darul Uloom is to be affiliated with the *Wifaq* then this year is the most appropriate time, because if this year's exams of Darul Uloom are conducted under *Wifaq* then InshaAllah Taqi will come first in the entire *Wifaq*, and thus Darul Uloom can attain the first position in its first year of affiliation with the *Wifaq*.

Though Darul Uloom could not get affiliated to the *Wifaq* even in that year and the exams were conducted at the level of Darul Uloom itself, it was the grace and benevolence of Allah Ta'ala that our teachers showered us with encouraging words at the answers we wrote. In those days, in line with the age-old marking system of Darul Deoband, the paper consisted of fifty marks. But if a student did the paper very well, the examiner would award more than fifty marks. Such papers were normally awarded fifty one marks, but for exceptional answers fifty two marks were also given, and very rarely fifty three as well. Hazrat Maulana Akbar Ali Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) was renowned for being stringent in giving marks. I have cited one instance of this when mentioning last year's exams, when in the exam of *Nukhbatul Fikr* he gave me forty one marks which was considered Lower Class in the marking system of those days, and at which I was heartbroken. This time the exam of Sunan Nasai was conducted by him, and he gave me fifty five marks in that paper (which is a record in the history of Darul Uloom which can never be broken) and even put a note on the paper with words of praise. Sadly I did not get to see this note myself because students were not shown their exam paper. But Hazrat Maulana mentioned this to (probably) our respected father and Hazrat Nazim Sahab (the Coordinator of Darul Uloom, may Allah's mercy be upon them both) that I have never seen such an answer paper in my entire teaching career. Additionally, though we learnt our results later, while Hazrat Maulana Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Sahab was marking my paper he made a congratulatory phone call to our respected father, and awarded me fifty four marks. The following were my results:

Subject	Marks
Bukhari <i>Sharif</i>	54
Muslim <i>Sharif</i>	52
Abu Dawod <i>Sharif</i>	52
Nasai <i>Sharif</i>	55

Tirmidhi <i>Sharif</i>	50
Tahawi <i>Sharif</i>	52
Muwatta Imam Muhammad	52
Shamail Tirmidhi	50
Muwatta Imam Malik	51
Ibn Majah	51

My elder brother Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Rafi Usmani Sahab (may his shade be extended) also had similar results.